THE LEVEL OF ASPIRATION: A COMPARISON OF THE TEST PERFORMANCES OF SCHIZOPHRENIC PATIENTS AND NORMAL SUBJECTS; A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF ELECTRO-CONVULSIVE TREATMENT UPON THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE SCHIZOPHRENIC

BY

KENNETH C. JOST

A.B., University of Illinois, 1940
A.M., University of Illinois, 1941
M.S., University of Illinois, 1947

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
IN THE GRADUATE COLLEGE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1950

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Following preliminary investigation relative to the selection of a task and of dependent variables a modified Rotter Aspiration Board was chosen for individual administration to 29 male hospital employees and to 29 schizophrenic patients. In each instance the test-performance yielded scores on 13 indices of human aspiration, thereby permitting in the first section of the study a comparison, phrased in terms of central tendency and scatter measures, between the scores earned by the 2 groups similar in age, educational status, and occupational ratings. Second, the effect of an interpolated independent variable, electro-shock, upon the performance scores earned by the group of 26 patients (mean inter-test interval was 45.65 days) were compared with scores earned by a control, as yet untreated group, of 10 schizophrenic cases (mean inter-test interval was 16.4 days). Subsequently, the scores earned by 16 psychiatrically adjudged "improved" patients were compared with the scores collected from measures earned by 10 "unimproved" patients comparably treated by electro-shock. By the application of statistical procedures devised for quantitative analysis of scores that obtain from small samples and by adhering to one and two per cent levels of significance for mean and variability differences respectively the following conclusions obtain:

1. The modified Rotter Aspiration Board is adapted for administration to schizophrenic patients.

2. The mean scores for the schizophrenic group were significantly higher than thise earned by the normal subjects on the following variables: Evaluation time, Aspiration range,

and Absolute discrepancy. Mean scores were significantly lower for the patients than for the normal group on: Practice, Aspiration, Performance, Credit, and Typical response scores. Variability for the psychotic group was significantly greater on: Evaluation time, Practice, Time first trial, Aspiration, Aspiration range, Goal discrepancy, Absolute discrepancy, Number of shifts, and Success scores.

3. The aforementioned differences were hypothetically interpreted as in agreement with the statement that the task was a measure of ego-defense to which the schizophrenic reacted with greater fear of failure.

4. No data from this study were found to agree with the findings reported in 1933 by Hausmann who has been the first to characterize the aspiration behavior of the schizophrenic. The psychotic subjects in this study did not consistently raise their bids after failure, lower them after success; nor did paranoid cases cling to high estimates.

5. Study of the net change between pre- and post-test means of the group of 26 treated cases as contrasted with 10 untreated showed no clearcut significant difference.

6. Study of the clinically improved and the unimproved patients' mean scores showed significant changes for the former, none for the latter. These shifts were accounted for in terms of a reduction in the intensity of ego-defense mechanisms associated with successful electro-shock therapy.

7. Comparison of the pre-test mean scores for the improved and unimproved groups showed significant differences for three of the thirteen variables studied.

Further study is indicated to explore the possibility that the task may possess prognostic signs useful in the selection of schizophrenic patients likely to benefit from electro-shock therapy.

12 tables, 2 figures, 93 references.

VITA

Kenneth C. Jost was born on November 12, 1914, in Fults, Illinois. He was graduated from Waterloo High School, Waterloo, Illinois in 1932 and enrolled at the University of Illinois in 1934. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from that institution in June, 1940. In September of the same year he began his graduate work there in the College of Education, obtaining the degree of Master of Arts in August, 1941. In January, 1942 he was drafted into the Army of the United States and served in the American and European Theaters. Upon discharge from the Army in 1946, he re-entered the Graduate College af the University of Illinois and received the degree of Master of Science in Clinical Psychology from that institution in October, 1947. He held the position of part-time Psychological Intern at the Danville, Illinois Veterans Administration Hospital from February, 1947, to September, 1950 in conjunction with the Clinical Psychology Training Program sponsored by the Veterans Administration and the University of Illinois.

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